

HISTORY OF THE ABIPONES.

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complain of any indisposition of body. I do not ¹⁴⁷
pretend to deny that temperance in eating and ²⁶²
drinking is the parent of longevity, and glut-
tony that of disease and premature death:
knowing that many saintly hermits have pro-
longed their lives to an hundred years, spite of
continual fasting, and that perhaps they would
have attained a still greater age had they taken
more nourishment. Yet I scarce wonder that
these Christian heroes lived so long, upon poor
and sparing diet, because they were always
celibate, and remained fixed to one spot with-
out ever experiencing great fatigue. Neither,
on the other hand, does it surprize me that
the Abipones should enjoy such singular lon-
gevity, united with so much voracity; for they,
who are all married, weary themselves with
running, hunting, swimming, riding, and mili-
tary exercises, and consequently to recruit
their strength, require, and easily digest a
greater quantity of food: for their vigour
would decay and their great bodies languish
were they not frequently reinvigorated with
plenty of victuals. The Abipones are daily ²⁷¹ •
obliged to assuage their thirst with river or
marsh water, which is generally tepid or warm,
very seldom cold, and not always quite fresh:
might not this be a circumstance conducive to
health? For physicians prefer river or rain ⁰⁰⁰

000 water to that of a spring, because it is lighter
 and impregnated with fewer noxious particles.
 The Chinese never taste a drop of cold water.
 Many think that snow and ice-water cause
 divers disorders. Snow, ice, springs of water,
 [133] and subterranean cells for cooling liquors are
 273 no where to be found in the territories of
 the Abipones, who are also unacquainted with
 wine expressed from grapes, or burnt out
 of fruits by chemic art. But though they
 use nothing but water to quench their thirst,
 yet on the birth of a child, the death of a
 relation, a resolution of war, or a victory,
 they assemble together to drink a strong liquor
 made of honey or the alfaroba infused in
 water, which when fermented causes intoxi-
 cation, but taken moderately is of much ser-
 vice to the health. For it is universally
 thought that the alfaroba and wild honey
 conduce much to prolong life and confirm the
 health. The Abipones are in the habit of
 271 drinking honey, in which the woods abound,
 273 very frequently; what if we call this a cause
 of their vigour and longevity? Both how-
 ever they partly owe to the use of the alfaroba,
 which they either eat dried, or drink in great
 quantities, as wine, when fermented in water
 000 by its own native heat. Taken either way it
 possesses singular virtue, for it restores the

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262 to those that are in need. Under the earth,
and even under the water, grow esculent roots.
Two species of the alfaroa, commonly called
St. John's bread, throughout great part of the
year, produce extremely wholesome, and by no
means unsavoury food, both meat and drink.

000 See the munificence of God even towards those
by whom he is not worshipped! Behold a rude
image of the golden age! The Abipones have

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271 it in their power to procure all the appurte-
nances of daily life, with little or no labour,
and though unacquainted with money of every
kind, are commodiously supplied with all
necessaries; for if a long drought have exhaust-
ed the rivers, they will find water even in the
most desert plains, under the leaves of the
caraquatà, or they can suck little apples, which
[824] are full of a watery liquor like melons, and grow
under the earth, or dig a well in the channel of
a dried-up river, and see water sufficient for
themselves and their horses spring up from
thence. A Spaniard, in the wilds of America,
will pine with thirst, either from being ignorant
of these things, or impatient of the labour of
obtaining them.

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484 As the supports of life are not all found col-
lected together in one place, nor will suffice for
a long time, or a great number of hordesmen, the
Abipones are obliged to change their residence,
and travel about continually.

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kill any animal they meet for food, with the spear they carry in their hands. That each may hunt more expeditiously, and obtain more booty, they separate their ranks, unless suspicious of the enemy's being close upon them, and disperse themselves over the plain, afterwards assembling to pass the night or mid-day together. For they know what situations afford the best opportunities of getting wood and water, and where they may safely lurk without fear of secret hostilities.

They think gourds and horns, which are used for flaggons and drinking-cups in Paraguay, a superfluous burden; for they can either take up water in the hollow of their hands, or stoop, and drink it like dogs. Pools and deep rivers are often at hand, but their salt and bitter waters are fitter to torture the stomach, than quench the thirst. They consider an iron knife, and a pebble to sharpen it, necessary instruments on a journey; as also two sticks, by the mutual attrition of which they can elicit fire even while sitting on horseback. Of these trifles consists the whole furniture of the Abipones, happy in being able to dispense with all that luggage and those waggons which in Europe are justly called the impediments of the army, and leeches of the treasury. Our Abipones pass the day and night in the open air, and are either parched

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holds it without spilling a drop. Honey, or the alfaroba steeped in water, obtains the desirable degree of acidity quicker, or slower, according to the state of the atmosphere, and ferments, in a certain way, without the addition of any thing else. The Abipones approach those vessels every now and then, and ascertain, by the smell, whether that honeyed beverage has attained its proper state. *Layam ycham*; It will soon ferment, they cry as they go away. Till at length some one comes, who, judging by his nose, declares that it has gained the necessary acidity. This being given out, they all flock to the appointed place. Those leathern vessels, full of foaming mead, are each brought by the hands of six or eight girls, who lay down their burden, and return home without speaking a word to the drinkers. Before the first vessel is quite exhausted, another is brought, to that is added a third, then a fourth, and so on. I did not in the least wonder to see the women so alert and industrious in performing these useful offices, because the more diligent they are, the higher character they obtain amongst their countrymen, and the greater favour do they gain from their husbands. It must be confessed, however, that the Abipones, when they sup and dine in private, drink nothing but water. I have known Abipones